



Cayuga Bird Club

September 2017

In This Issue:

[Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, Sept 11](#)

Speaker: Dr. Amanda Rodewald

In the thick of it: how invasive plants affect breeding birds

[From the President](#)

Jody Enck

[Calendar](#)

[Montezuma Shorebird Walks](#)

Sept 2 and Sept 9

[Upcoming Fall Field Trips](#)

[CBC Budget 2017-2018](#)

[Travel to Costa Rica with the Cayuga Bird Club!](#)

[Cayuga Bird Club Picnic](#)

[Cayuga Basin First Records](#)

[Shindagin Trip Report](#)

Laura Stenzler

[Connecticut Hill Field Trip Report](#)

Suan Yong

[My Dickcissel Story](#)

Suan Yong

[Hummingbird Nesting: a Mama's Hard Work](#)

Dave Nutter

[Migration Celebration 2017](#)

[2017 Montezuma Muckrace - register now!](#)

[2017 NYSOA Meeting in Niagara Falls](#)

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, September 11



In the Thick of It: How Invasive Plants Affect Breeding Birds

Speaker:

Amanda D. Rodewald, Ph.D.

Garvin Professor of Ornithology and Director of Conservation Science, Cornell University

Robert F. Schumann Faculty Fellow, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Department of Natural Resources

Faculty Fellow, Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, Cornell University

Invasive species are among the most serious conservation threats to native biodiversity. Invasive plants, in particular, can affect birds by altering food and nesting resources. Recent studies also show that invasive plants can increase the vulnerability of breeding birds to nest predators. Dr. Rodewald will discuss a decade of research showing how Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), one of the most problematic exotic and invasive shrubs in eastern forests, influences predator-prey interactions in urbanizing landscapes.

As both a faculty member in the Cornell Department of Natural Resources and Director of Conservation Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Amanda Rodewald works to generate, apply, and communicate science in ways that advance understanding of

Calendar

Sept. 2 Guided Shorebird Walk at

Montezuma, 7:00 am

Leader: Dave Nicosia

Meet at Montezuma NWR Visitor Center parking lot

Sept. 5 [Registration](#) deadline for Montezuma Muckrace

Sept. 9 Guided Shorebird Walk at

Montezuma, 7:00 am

Leader: Dave Nicosia

Meet at Montezuma NWR Visitor Center parking lot

Sept. 10 CBC Field Trip to Montezuma,

7:30 am - 5:00 pm

Leader: Bob McGuire

Meet at Stewart Park East parking area at 7:30 am

Sept. 11 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, 7:30 pm

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Speaker: Dr. Amanda Rodewald

In the thick of it: how invasive plants affect breeding birds

Sept. 15-16 Montezuma Muckrace

7:00 pm Friday - 7:00 pm Saturday

Montezuma Wetlands Complex

Sept. 16 Migration Celebration

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Sept. 23 CBC Field Trip - Fall birds, 7:30 am - noon

Leader: Meena Haribal

Meet at Cornell Lab of Ornithology parking lot

Oct. 7, 8 Sparrow Identification Walks,

8:30-10:00 am

Leader: Mark Chao

Meet at Cornell Community Gardens, Freese Road

Oct. 9 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Speaker: Suan Hsi Yong

ecology and also support conservation. Her research program seeks to understand the behavioral and demographic mechanisms guiding population, community, and landscape-scale responses of birds to land use change and human activity in the eastern US and Latin America.

The meeting will be held at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Doors open at 7:00 pm and there will be cookies and conversation starting at 7:15. Bird club business begins at 7:30 pm followed by the presentation. All are welcome.

From the President

Jody Enck



Greetings Cayuga Bird Club members,

I hope you have been enjoying your summer and all the birding activities that the season brings for you. For about two months now, I've been enjoying the trickle of birds that indicates the start of fall migration. This has really picked up in the last week or two. Looking back at my notebooks from this time period, I see that my yard has been visited by Hooded, Canada, and Magnolia Warblers, as well as other birds moving around before migrating in earnest. These include Scarlet Tanager, lots of Red-eyed Vireos, and Veeries. I've also noted migrating Barn and Tree Swallows and Chimney Swifts. Did I tell you how much I love this time of year?

If you love migration too, then please consider helping your club at the Migration Celebration hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology on Saturday the 16th of September. The Cayuga Bird Club will have a table at the celebration, and we could use your help staffing our table for just an hour or so on that day. Please email me at president@cayugabirdclub.org if you are willing to help out in some way.

Your club has lots of great activities lined up for this fall and beyond. We have wonderful field trips on tap,

Who goes there? Birding with Infrared Thermography

See our [Web Calendar](#) for more events and field trips.

Guided Shorebird Walks at Montezuma NWR



There are two more Shorebird Walks scheduled at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge this month: **September 2** and **September 9**. Dave Nicosia will be leading these walks. If you are interested in learning more about shorebird identification, this is a great opportunity. Dave will be able to take participants to walk on the dike between Knox-Marsellus and Puddler's marshes, which will allow much closer views of the birds that come there during Fall migration.

Participants should meet at the Montezuma NWR Visitor Center at 7 am. Bring binoculars, scope (if you have one) and make sure you wear sturdy boots, bring sunscreen, insect repellent and water (plenty of water!!) and snacks. In the past, we have had a few people get dehydrated and sometimes the insects can be pretty bad. The walks should last until 11 am to noon or so, depending on how much we see.

The shorebird diversity changes each week. Last weekend Dave Nutter reported that his group found 14 different shorebird species, including Baird's Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. People on that walk were also treated to sightings of Virginia Rail and Sora.

including many local birding hotspots and two trips to Central America (see the article about a trip to [Costa Rica](#), and stay tuned for more information about another trip being planned to Honduras). We will have some awesome speakers at our club meetings. We have a team registered to participate in the Montezuma Muckrace, and we will be interacting with the Ithaca-area community at Migration Celebration. Please take part in as many of these great activities as you can!

Most of all, please look outside and pay attention to the comings and goings of all the great birds in our area.

Good birding,

Proposed 2017-2018 Budget

Susan Danskin, Treasurer

The annual budget will be presented to the membership for a vote at the September 11 meeting.

	2017-2018 PROPOSED CBC BUDGET			
	BUDGETED	ACTUAL (YTD)	PROPOSED	
	2016-2017	2016-2017	2017-2018	
		as of May 1		
Income				
Donations Received	\$ 500.00	\$ 585.00	\$ 550.00	donations above and beyond membership
Dues Received	\$ 1,850.00	\$ 1,810.00	\$ 1,800.00	membership dues
Interest Income (Savings)	\$ 10.00	\$ 7.45	\$ 10.00	interest earned savings acct
Income Total	\$ 2,360.00	\$ 2,402.45	\$ 2,360.00	
Expenses				
Brochures	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	membership brochures
Donations Paid	\$ (450.00)	\$ (300.00)	\$ (450.00)	Redheads World Series of Birding, FLIT &
Dues Paid	\$ (300.00)	\$ (300.00)	\$ (300.00)	FLIT, Lab of O, NYSOA, & NYSYBC
Gifts Given	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	condolences
Insurance	\$ (450.00)	\$ (153.64)	\$ (461.04)	Arcadia insurance annual premium
Muckrace	\$ (100.00)	\$ (50.00)	\$ (100.00)	entry fees for up to 2 recreational
NYSOA Annual Meeting	\$ (200.00)	\$ -	\$ (350.00)	teams
Paypal Fees	\$ (40.00)	\$ (38.28)	\$ (40.00)	delegate attendance
Speaker Dinner	\$ (250.00)	\$ (82.45)	\$ (250.00)	paypal fees from membership payments
Speaker Travel	\$ (200.00)	\$ (200.00)	\$ (300.00)	9 speaker dinners & Myers pavillion
Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (30.00)	rental
Website/Software Fees	\$ (14.99)	\$ (29.98)	\$ (14.99)	travel fees for 1 speaker
Expenses Total	\$(2,004.99)	\$(1,154.35)	\$(2,296.03)	stamps, paper, etc
Net Income	\$ 355.01	\$ 1,248.10	\$ 63.97	domain name, ibank, publishing software

Shindagin Hollow, June 3

Laura Stenzler

About a dozen people joined me early June 3 for a chilly start along Shindagin Hollow Road in Shindagin

Mike Tetlow of the Rochester Birding club will also lead a shorebird ID walk on Saturday, **September 16, at 10 am.**

The refuge has opened up the dike at Knox-Marsellus Marsh, normally off-limits to the public, for these walks. The guided shorebird walks are open to all.

Upcoming Fall Field Trips

Bob McGuire will lead an all-day trip to Montezuma on **Sunday, September 10th. Meet at Stewart Park (east side) at 7:30 am.** Bring your optics, snacks, and lunch. There will be opportunities to purchase food. We will get home around 5:00 pm. Questions: email bmcguire@clarityconnect.com.

Meena Haribal will lead a half-day trip to look for Fall warblers and other birds on **Saturday, September 23. Meet at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 7:30 am.** Bring something to drink and snacks. We should be back by about noon. Dress warmly according to weather. Questions: email mmh3@cornell.edu.

Mark Chao will lead two morning walks with a focus on sparrow identification on **Saturday and Sunday, October 7 and 8.** Meet at the parking lot of the **Cornell Community Gardens on Freese Road at 8:30 am.** Be prepared to walk on uneven ground among tall, possibly wet weeds. We may also visit other nearby sites as birding conditions warrant.

These trips are open to all. Please check the [Cayuga Bird Club calendar](#) for updates in case there are date or time changes for these or any other field trips.

Travel to Costa Rica with Holbrook Travel and the

Hollow State Forest, south of Ithaca. We started at the point where the pavement ends, with a car shuttle to position one at the end of the first mile or so of the walk, allowing drivers to ride back to the start to retrieve their cars, pick up their passengers and continue along the road as we birded. But everyone was having such a good time that we ended up walking the entire two miles from the start of the trip to the cedar swamp before cars came to pick up riders!

While a bit late in migration, there were many breeding birds active and vocal. We observed two cooperative Mourning Warblers, many Common Yellowthroats, Chestnut-sided Warblers and American Redstarts. We had good looks at Scarlet Tanagers, Canada Warblers and Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue Warblers as well. There was at least one Red-shouldered Hawk calling in the distance and a pair of Common Ravens made a brief appearance. Other birds seen or heard included Red-eyed Vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, White-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper – and many more, which I can't remember! It was a great birding experience, as Shindagin Hollow usually is.

Connecticut Hill Trip Report, June 4

Suan Yong

In spite of rain and thunder in the forecast, six people joined Dave Gislason and me on the CBC field trip to Connecticut Hill. While looking for a singing Chestnut-sided Warbler with my thermal infrared camera, I found instead a Ruby-throated Hummingbird sitting in its tiny lichen-lined nest high in a tree:

Cayuga Bird Club!



Black-Mandibled Toucan, photo by Wes Blauvelt

Cayuga Bird Club members have the opportunity go on a **birding trip to Costa Rica in April!** The tour will be organized by [Holbrook Travel](#), which has been bringing groups to Costa Rica to see birds and other wildlife for decades. More than 870 species of birds have been recorded in Costa Rica. The local guides that Holbrook Travel uses are experts at identification by both sight and sound, and will help us to find as many species as possible. The trip is appropriate for both beginners and more advanced birders. We'll also be able to observe other fascinating Costa Rican wildlife like frogs, monkeys, bats and sloths.

This trip is planned for **April 20 - April 29**. The cost is \$2500 per person, and includes all meals, accommodations and activities, in-country transportation, full-time guide, bottled water, a donation to the Cayuga Bird Club and carbon offset. The fee does not include international airfare, gratuities for guide or driver or items of a personal nature.

Trip highlights will include taking hikes in the 500-acre rainforest reserve at Selva Verde Lodge, an area that provides habitat to more than 350 bird species, including the endangered Great Green Macaw. Then we will get a different perspective of the rainforest from atop the 100-meter suspended walkway at Tirimbuna Biological Reserve, and see species that spend their time in the forest canopy. We will also visit the world-renowned La Selva Biological



We also got good close looks at some of the many Alder Flycatchers singing in the area, apparently involved in turf battles and thus less concerned about our presence. In the woods a "yurr"-ing Veery gave fleeting looks in the bush, alongside what I thought was a cowbird fledgling, except it wasn't trilling incessantly like they seem to usually do. At least two Ovenbirds then seemed to surround our vantage, singing here then disappearing, popping up there then flying off before I can scope it, but returning fairly close to give good but fleeting looks. I wondered if we weren't too close to their nest for their comfort. Not far up the trail my thermal camera found the day's second nest, a Red-eyed Vireo about 10-feet from the ground, a boldly-eyestriped face looking down with its red eye discernible in the scope.

Continuing across the pond as the drizzle increased, we settled under some pine trees from where a trilling voice gave Diane a fleeting look at a Pine Warbler, but the bird just flew higher and was not to be seen or heard again. Meanwhile, sitting quietly out in the rain was a Chestnut-sided Warbler giving great scope views, though we wondered why it wasn't taking cover from the cold rain.

Station to watch for species such as Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Crested Guan, and Spectacled Owl. We'll spend two nights in the cloud forest of the San Gerardo de Dota, with its many hummingbirds, tanagers and flower piercers. We'll also look here for the Resplendent Quetzal, a gorgeous bird that lives in this forest year round.



Fiery-billed Aracari, photo by Wes Blauvelt

For more information and a detailed itinerary, contact Jody Enck at jwe4@cornell.edu. This trip is limited to 12 people.

Time to Renew Your Membership

September is membership renewal month for the Cayuga Bird Club. Dues are \$15 per family or \$10 per student.

Payment may be made via Paypal at cayugabirdclub.org or by mailing a check to Cayuga Bird Club, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca NY 14850.

Please include your email address (or addresses for family memberships) with your membership renewal to keep your newsletter subscription current.



Up in a low tree were at least nine Cedar Waxwings resting, then foraging in some berry bushes. A brilliant Rose-breasted grosbeak flew in close at eye level for great looks before leaving with a female.

In our last leg through the woods we found a small cup nest on the ground, and not long after my thermal camera found a second Red-eyed Vireo nest.



CBC Picnic at Myers Point, June 12, 2017



Cayuga Bird Club members gathered at Myers Point on June 12 for our annual picnic. Good food, great company, and a bird walk along Salmon Creek! What more could we ask for?



Killdeer nest, photo by Paul Anderson



Killdeer on nest, photo by Suan Yong



Belted Kingfisher with fish, photo by Suan Yong

We ended up with a pretty awesome outing, in spite of the weather; rather, this reaffirms my experience that birding trips in the rain - as long as it isn't windy - always seem to turn out great, with the birds seeming to get closer than usual. Our big visual miss for the day was the Hooded Warbler singing two different songs from up high as we traversed its territory next to the parking lot.

Thanks again to all who participated.



Wet birding, photo by Donna Scott

My Dickcissel Story

Suan Yong

The summer of 2017 is seeing reports of Dickcissels outside their usual range, including here in upstate New York. This is reminiscent of the last big irruption in 2012, and my own interesting tale. In the early summer of 2012, I remember reading about the phenomenon starting to be observed, with Dickcissels reported far out of range, "as far away as



Green Heron with tadpole, photo by Suan Yong



photo by Diane Morton

First-of-Year Birds Reported June-August for the Cayuga Lake Basin

Listed below are Cayuga Lake Basin first arrivals reported this summer.

- May 31 Franklin's Gull
- June 5 Red Crossbill
- June 9 Little Blue Heron
- June 16 Willet
- June 24 Dickcissel
- July 6 Yellow-throated Warbler
- July 8 Ruff
- July 22 Plegadis sp (Ibis)
- Aug. 15 Western Tanager
- Aug. 23 Baird's Sandpiper
- Aug. 24 Red Knot

2017 total count through August: 270 species

Thanks to Dave Nutter for compiling these records for the club. Details are available on the [CBC website](#).

Migration Celebration 2017!

Newfoundland.” One hypothesis was that droughts in the Midwest had forced the birds to seek out new grounds.

On July 1, a singing Dickcissel was found at the Seneca Meadows Wetland Preserve, and all throughout that first week of July, reports poured in from people having easily found this prominent singer near the oak tree, later turning into two males and a nest-building female, with a possible third male. By the second week, the boldest male was favoring the top of the oak tree as its singing perch, as report after report came in from birders to the effect of: “went to the oak tree, found the dickcissel singing on top.”

It wasn't until Saturday, July 14, when I had an opportunity to drive to the north end of the lake. My morning was spent volunteering with the MARSH group pulling out water chestnuts from Carncross Road, an activity I would highly recommend. After lunch I made my way to Seneca Meadows, proceeded to the oak tree, and neither saw nor heard the Dickcissel. I walked the very long loop trail around the meadows, finding Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows aplenty, Indigo Buntings and Swamp Sparrows, even a fox and a skunk, but no Dickcissel, even as I circled back to check on the oak tree again. A Song Sparrow feeding a cowbird was my birding highlight of that visit.

Checking the Cayuga birding email list, the bird was reported thrice that morning at Seneca Meadows, but zero times since, including only negative reports the following weekend. It seemed like I had missed the Dickcissel by a matter of hours!

Oh, well. I guess Dickcissel will have to wait for a trip to the Midwest to make my life list.

Fast forward to late August, when a buddy and I took a trip to Newfoundland. I steered our trip towards birding sites like Gannet and Puffin colonies while my friend steered us towards trad band performances and cod tongues for dinner. It was a very fun trip in a very remarkable place.



Join Us
Saturday,
September
16
10:00 a.m. to
3:00 p.m.
Free

Saturday, September 16 10 am - 3 pm

Come explore the Cornell Lab of Ornithology! Learn about bird migration, build a birdhouse, and watch scientists band wild birds. Enjoy interactive exhibits, games, workshops, and trail walks. New this year: DJ Ecotone will perform at 3:00 pm!

Free workshop tickets will be handed out at the Migration Celebration welcome table. Space is limited so be sure to arrive early, check the schedule, and pick up your tickets. The event is free.

- See live birds from the Cornell Raptor Program
- Learn what you can do to make life easier for birds
- Look for birds and other wildlife along the trails
- Get banded like a bird, play games, and more
- Learn how research is used to help birds worldwide
- Get a behind-the-scenes look at the Cornell Lab!



On our final day, we visited Ferryland on the southeast coast, not too far from “the easternmost point of North America”. Under the loom of the lighthouse, an unfamiliar sparrow-like bird flew out of some low bushes and sat in the beautiful afternoon light against the deep blue Atlantic backdrop as I snapped a number of photographs.



I figured it might be some sort of lark or longspur, but when I flipped through the birds in my Sibley app I found no matches. Strange. It wasn't until I was on the plane back to New York that I thought to check Dickcissel, and sure enough, that's what it was. I had my Sibley app set to filter

Newfoundland birds, so it had excluded Dickcissel from the list!

In the end, my lifer Dickcissel and I had to travel to the ends of the earth to meet each other!

[Hummingbird Nesting: A Mama's Hard Work](#)

Montezuma Muckrace **September 15-16, 2017**

Register now for the 21th Annual Montezuma Muckrace!

This Big Day competition begins at 7:00 PM Friday September 15th and runs for 24 hours.

Register your team online at <http://friendsofmontezuma.org/muckrace-registration/>. **The registration deadline is September 5th.**

Teams will compete to see who can see the most species within the Montezuma Wetlands Complex in Cayuga, Wayne, and Seneca counties. The complex includes the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, the NYSDEC Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area and the Montezuma Audubon Center. The higher purpose behind the fun is raising funds for the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Last year the total raised was \$10,819.

There will be six categories in which to compete:

- Competitive
- Collegiate
- Low-carbon (no cars used)
- Recreational
- Family/Mentor
- Photo (team with photos of the most species wins)

Join the fun! For forms & rules, more information, and **to make a donation** go to <http://friendsofmontezuma.org/projects-programs/muckrace/>.

The Cayuga Bird Club will be sponsoring the Arrogant Bustards recreational team in this year's Muckrace.

Story by Dave Nutter, Photos by Dave Nutter and Melissa Groo

Many local birders lamented a lack of hummingbirds this year, but I was lucky. I noticed one building a nest, and I followed its progress. Although it was in a public place with lots of human activity nearby, I was concerned that extra attention might cause it to be abandoned or predated, so I kept quiet about its precise location. Still, I wanted to document and share it. I am not much of a photographer, and when Melissa Groo asked, I agreed to show her. Meanwhile I managed to do some passable digiscoping. This article is some of what I found.

On the afternoon of 6 June I was biking south from Stewart Park on the Cayuga Waterfront Trail between Newman Golf Course and Fall Creek near the north end of Pier Road. I had stopped to appreciate the Sycamore grove when I happened to see a female hummingbird flying among some tall weeds nearby. I always feel lucky when I see a hummingbird. Often it's just a suggestion of moving green on a green background, but this was special. It was carrying a ball of white fluff in its bill, perhaps from Cottonwood seeds, which I knew must be nest material. I saw no flowers where the bird was foraging; surely she was gathering spider silk as glue. The white blob helped me follow her as she flew off behind trees and bushes. I searched the branches of a Sycamore along the creek where I thought she stopped, and I found this:





NYSOA Annual Meeting **November 10-12**

The 70th Annual New York State Ornithological Association Meeting and Birders Conference is scheduled for November 10 – 12, 2017 in Niagara Falls, New York. Hosted by the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS), the activities will be based at the brand new Double Tree by Hilton Hotel on the spectacular rapids of the Niagara River, just above the mighty Niagara Falls. Conference attendees will be able to walk to the falls and Niagara Falls State Park, which is not only wonderfully scenic but spectacular for birds. The dates were chosen so as not to interfere with Thanksgiving and to give birders a chance to see some of the special gulls that occur along the Niagara River, as well as a great assortment of waterfowl. Depending on the weather, there will be a chance to see Little, Franklins, and Sabine's Gulls, and Black-legged Kittiwake.

We have several exciting field trips planned, as well as two entertaining speakers for the Friday and Saturday night programs. Our keynote speaker will be Neil Hayward, who broke the North American Big Year record a few years ago, and on Friday night, Paul Guris will talk about pelagic birding in New York State waters. We are expecting a top-notch assortment of vendors, artists, and other birding groups. The BOS is proud and extremely excited to host the annual birders conference and we look forward to seeing you there!

It didn't look much like a nest, but already a few shingles of lichen adorned the side.

It was about 60' away, looking north from the trail just above the tops of some weeds and between the branches of several bushes and trees. Over time, this viewing tunnel became smaller as the vegetation grew from every side, and every breeze moved the Sycamore branch as well as the intervening leaves.

For detail-oriented folks, the precise nest location on Google Maps is about 42.45619, -76.50242 on the upstream side of a large spreading tree. Typical of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, the nest was on a downward hanging branch. I estimate it was 20' from the bank of the creek, 5' from the tip of the branch, and 10' above the water. That's a pretty good place to avoid many predators.

Here she is the next day working on the nest. I only saw her do this in the middle of the day, not early morning nor toward evening. Perhaps feeding was more important just before and after a night's fast.



I didn't check every day, but by 12 June the nest appeared complete, yet was unoccupied when I

Registrations are open: [Register for the Conference](#)

Migratory Bird Stamps for National Wildlife Refuges



The 2017-2018 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or Federal Duck Stamp, is now available for purchase at Wildlife Refuges, US post offices and through the American Birding Association. This year's stamp features three Canada Geese in flight, painted by artist James Hautman.

The stamp sells for \$25 and raises about \$25 million each year to conserve and protect wetland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since 1934, over six million acres of grassland and wetland habitat have been protected for birds and other wildlife.

You can [purchase a Duck Stamp](#) online through the American Birding Association. Show your support of bird conservation in our National Wildlife Refuge System and make your voice as a birder count!

looked. By the 13th she had settled down to incubate:



She is shaded from the mid-day sun by a large leaf. That parasol probably also served as an umbrella this rainy spring and helped hide the nest from aerial predators as well.

That was the same day I showed the nest to Melissa Groo. I regretted that she missed the nest construction, but it turns out hummingbirds may still add to the nest after egg-laying. That afternoon, when light came in from the side, Melissa captured this photo of the bird with a blob of fluff:



As I said, the site was in a busy area. People drive on Pier Rd. They practice firefighting nearly across the street. They walk, run, and bike on the Cayuga Waterfront Trail. They canoe, kayak, and paddleboard in Fall Creek. And just downstream of the nest tree is a popular fishing spot.

Despite all the people, the hummingbird chose to nest there. Maybe people help deter predators, or maybe the site seemed good enough to overcome any disadvantage from people.

The nest was visible from where the anglers stood, sat, and built a campfire, but I doubt they noticed it. Melissa disliked that vantage because the twig supporting the nest partly blocked the view of it. I didn't want to watch from that clearing because I didn't want to be so obvious to the bird, or compete with anglers for space, or draw their attention to the nest. I found that I could also scope the nest from farther away alongside the trail looking east between branches of poison ivy on another tree and past any people fishing without bothering them. This photo was taken from there, about 80' away, again showing the parasol foliage, on 17 June during the incubation phase, when I visited less frequently.



I also checked briefly on the 24th. There were many people on the trail because of a Reggae festival at Stewart Park. A family with a couple rambunctious kids occupied the fishing site. And the wind made the nest sway up and down too much for me to photograph. Somehow the female hummingbird sat steadily. By the way, I should mention that nesting and raising young is strictly a female job among hummingbirds.

On June 29th I again watched the nest looking east through vegetation past the fishing spot. The

hummingbird was not there when I arrived, but she came back very soon and settled onto the nest. She seemed restless. She would sit on the nest for a couple minutes, fly off for less than a minute, then resume sitting, but would not quite sit still. Her tail vibrated. Sometimes her back arched a bit. She looked around. She was not at ease or meditative like an incubating bird. Off she flew again (the direction varied), but briefly. I assumed her forays were for airborne prey she spied from the nest, but I never saw anything in her bill.

This cycle happened about ten times. Then one time instead of immediately sitting in the nest, she stood on the left edge of the nest, lowered her bill straight down, and was met by the broad angle of a tiny yellow bill rising to be fed. It happened quickly; I wasn't prepared to photograph it. Then she settled down to brood between each of another ten or so excursions to gradually fill her crop with protein before feeding again. This time she reached over and poked down into the right side of the nest, but that side of the nest was taller, so I couldn't see a baby bill that time. The third time she fed, it was to both sides of the nest. It was clear to me that the standard brood of two had hatched.

During one of her absences I saw something move in the right side of the nest behind the twig. It must have been a cloaca because I saw a turd get ejected from there up out of the nest. It stuck for awhile on an overhanging leaf and can be seen to the right of the mama in this photo:



This first excrement fell off before I left, but many more accumulated on these leaves, as can be seen in later photos. They should be a good clue in any search for hummingbird nests.

One other thing happened that day that was more unexpected and unexplained. At one point while Mama brooded, a second adult hummingbird, female I believe, flew into my field of view, briefly hovered facing the nest, then continued on her way, eliciting no obvious (to me) reaction from the owner of the nest.

The day after I first saw feeding, Melissa went to photograph the nest her second time, but couldn't find it by looking east. Between our visits the parasol leaf got bent down and caught behind the supporting twig. No longer would it shelter the nest from sun, rain, or overhead predators. Instead it blocked our view of the nest from that side. I figured this out on my next visit, 2 July, by noticing silhouettes of several defecations on that leaf as well as the shadow movement of the mama's beak while she sat on the nest. I wonder whether some violent wind or rain forced the leaf down.

Before I understood why I couldn't see the nest from there, I had a scare. In searching for the nest I instead saw fishing line tangled on an adjacent branch. Then when I found the nest by looking from the other side, Mama wasn't brooding, and she took much longer to return than she had on my previous visit.

We resumed observing by looking north between various leaves. Here is Mama brooding on 2 July. The nest is plastered with lichen bits by now. The vertical leaf to the left is the former parasol. There's a piece of poop on it.



Also on 2 July I first managed to photograph feeding by keeping my phone in its adapter attached to my scope, adjusting the scope to follow the movements of the nest, and using the switch on my earbud as a remote trigger for the shutter... and waiting...

Here's Mama perched vertically on the right side of the nest, her tail extending down, her body and head partly obscured by a leaf, and her bill extending down into the tiny yellow bill of a nestling whose closed eye bulges to the left.



In another feeding that day, Mama's body is even more hidden, with only a bit of her shoulder and neck

showing, and her bill is entirely inserted into the nestling who has reached up and grabbed on with its yellow bill. Again the baby's eye is to the left, and the pink throat is on the right side.



The day after this, Pier Road and this section of the trail were closed off so that a tremendous barrage of fireworks could be ignited in the adjacent golf course. It was a wonderful, brilliant, cacophonous show as viewed from the boat ramp at Treman Marina, but I feared for its effects on the hummingbirds. On 4 July, a brief visit showed the same activities as before. Perhaps for birds it had just been a particularly strong lightning storm..

By 6 July there were signs of the babies' progress. In this marginal photo, the rim of the nest shows a cream-colored fringe, indicating that the young are getting big enough to fill the nest cup, and that they are getting a coat of down. On the right is the tip of a

bill sticking up.



The babies' bills were obviously starting to grow, developing into long dark needles at their tips. Although I took many photos of feeding sessions that day, I show this one for its clues about the food Mama pumps into the nestlings. After a bout of feeding, a mucus-like strand remains between the bills of Mama and a baby, and adhering to this is a tiny white object, perhaps an insect egg, larva, or pupa. Also it's fun to see a hummingbird stick out its tongue. The other baby's bill is also raised and open to beg in front of Mama's breast, but it's a bit out of focus due to motion.



Once the young had hatched and seemed to be doing well, and after the vegetation had closed in more, it seemed less risky to move a bit closer. These photos were from midway between the trail and the creek, about 40' from the nest. I stood among some bushes

and young trees, believing that passersby on the trail probably wouldn't notice me. But the female hummingbird, when she left the nest after one feeding, came directly over to me, hovered a moment in front of the scope's objective lens, then left. I wasn't hidden to her, and at the very least, my scope was the object of curiosity. After the next feeding, she gave a chirp nearby, and I left.

When I stopped by the next evening, I saw the Sycamore branches over the water thrashing about violently. An angler had snagged the tree and was trying to yank the line free. I mentioned that a bird nest was in those branches, then retreated from the shore to the path. The thrashing ceased, and the angler biked away having freed or cut the line. I found the nest in my scope. Nothing showed above the rim. I waited... Then Mama arrived, and babies sat up to beg. Relieved, I went on my way. The little family had weathered another gale.

Stay tuned for more about the nestlings. Dave's story of the hummingbird family will continue in the October issue of the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter.

Cayuga Bird Club

Educating and inspiring the birding community of the Cayuga Lake Basin and Central New York since 1914

The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, beginning with refreshments at 7:15 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All meetings and most field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 annually per household, \$10 for students, payable in September. Payment may be made via Paypal at cayugabirdclub.org or by mailing a check to Cayuga Bird Club, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca NY 14850. Please include your email address (or addresses for family memberships) with your membership application to receive the club newsletter.

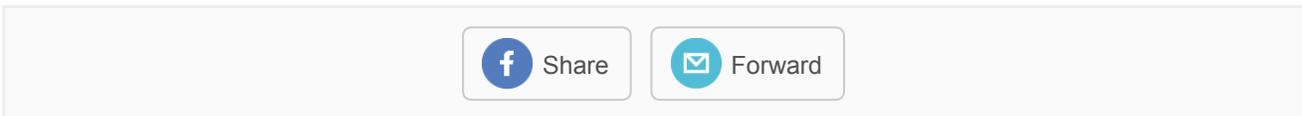
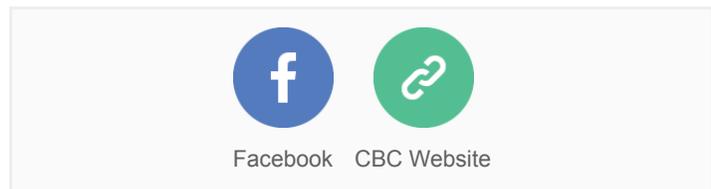
Members receive via email the monthly Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter, from September through June. Newsletter submissions may be sent to Diane Morton, newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, birding hot spots, book reviews, and original poetry, art, and photos.

Cayuga Bird Club Officer Contact Information is available on the [Cayuga Bird Club website](#).

Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Allaben-Confer

Don't miss an issue of the newsletter: add newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org to your email contacts.

Stay in touch with the Cayuga Bird Club through our [Facebook](#) page and [Cayuga Bird Club Website](#).



You are receiving this email
as a member of the Cayuga Bird Club.
We do not share our email list with any other organization.

Cayuga Bird Club
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca NY 14850

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

